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WAR AND MISSIONS

An Address by

The Very Rev. H. C. Robbins, D.D.

THE WOMAN'S AUXILIARY
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By the Very Reverend Howard C. Robbins, D.D., Dean of the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, New York City

THESE are trying times for people who are interested in missions. There are all the old difficulties and discouragements to face, and in addition there are a number of new ones occasioned by the War. But that is only one side of it. On the other side, the War has given new incentives to missionary effort. It has opened to us new missionary opportunities, and inspired new missionary hopes. Taking for granted your interest in missions, I wish to say a few words about these new conditions: first about the new difficulties, and then about the new incentives and hopes.

One difficulty is competition. The War has brought home to us innumerable needs and claims. War relief has been organized upon the most colossal scale that the world has ever heard of. It had to be, to meet the overwhelming needs. Everywhere one goes one sees people knitting sweaters, or preparing surgical dressings, or getting up bazaars and fairs to obtain funds for relief work. It is right that this should be so. It would be dreadful if it were not so and if all these tragical claims upon our compassion and our helpfulness were not given the right of way. But in giving

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war relief the right of way, other forms of philanthropic effort are being subordinated, and some of them are even being endangered. One hears everywhere the question what is to become of this or that beneficent work, now that its former supporters are so engrossed in new tasks.

For people who believe in missions, as you and I believe in missions, the answer is very simple. Missions are a part, and an indispensable part, of our war work. They are as much a part of it as surgical dressings, or munition manufacturer. For *ideas, as well as armies, are contending in this gigantic conflict. Essentially and fundamentally, this war is a conflict of ideas.* What are its objects, as we Americans have defined them in our thoughts and purposes? Liberty. But the object of all missionary endeavor is to bring to men the liberty which is in Christ Jesus and his Gospel—Democracy. But the Bible is the textbook of democracy. Every great political movement looking toward the emancipation of the common people and their establishment in self-government has had its origin in the Christian Scriptures, either directly, as in England and America, or indirectly, as in France, through recognition of the principles which found their first expression there.

So with our other war aims: law, justice, respect for the weak, and the vindication of public right. Why, they are the political expression of missionary enterprise! There is no law, no justice, no respect for the weak, and no vindication of public right which is not ultimately founded on belief in the God who is

the Judge of all the earth, and who demands these things of men and nations. The aims with which we have entered the War are precisely the aims which Christianity, and Christianity alone, can make secure for us and for others. To neglect missionary efforts at a time like this would be to throw aside the sword of the spirit in what, in its last analysis, is essentially a spiritual conflict. It would be to resort to the crude and brutal reliance upon force alone which has led to the moral bankruptcy of the despotic Power which we oppose.

The next difficulty is a good deal like the first. The War exacts time from us for relief work. It exacts money in the form of taxation. We are just beginning to learn the meaning of taxation. By the middle of next March we shall know a good deal more about it than we do now. We do not grudge the money that is being required of us. If ever a government had a prior lien on all the resources of its citizens our Government has that right now. We shall give all that is required, and we shall give it not only without complaining, but with profound satisfaction that we are able in this way to forward the cause to which we have solemnly dedicated the whole force and resourcefulness of our national existence. Still, it is not possible to pay such taxes without finding the margin available for gifts correspondingly diminished. What is going to happen, for example, to the apportionment for General Missions? That is a question which I have heard raised a dozen times within the last ten days.

There are two answers. The first and obvious one is sacrifice. Most of those who give largely to missions live in a very comfortable way, sometimes even in a luxurious way. The place to cut down first is in that scale of living, not in the support given to the brave men and women who represent us on the far-flung battle lines of Christ. They have made their sacrifices for the Gospel. It is time now that we should be making ours. I cannot believe that while this country is raising and spending money in billions it is going to be impossible to raise this year as in former years the pitifully small proportion of our wealth which has hitherto been devoted to Christian missions. In England, where taxes are higher than they are here, and where the cost of living is higher than it is here, I understand that gifts for missions have not only not fallen off, but actually increased. When I read that item of news in a missionary review I felt that I had just had news of a great British victory. It was a victory of the finest and highest sort, far reaching in its results. But, like all other victories which amount to anything in this war, it was won by sacrifice.

There is also another supplementary answer, and that is intensive cultivation of the home field. In our missionary giving in the past we have not sufficiently taken into account the value of the small gifts which come from numerous givers who give in a systematic way. Now this is a field which is capable of greatly increased fruitfulness, but which needs to be worked up. Experience has shown that it

can best be worked up by the every member canvass and by the introduction of the duplex envelope system. For many parishes this involves a radical innovation, but the present emergency demands and justifies the innovation. If the larger gifts are going to be somewhat reduced, the difference ought to be made up, and more than made up, by a great increase in the number of small but regular weekly gifts. The parishes, as well as their offerings, will be greatly strengthened by it in the end.

I come now to the greatest difficulty, the greatest embarrassment and discouragement of all. That is the War itself. Here is Christian Europe, and Christian America, engaged in fratricidal strife. Here is war in its stark horror being waged between nations all of which have received the Gospel, all of which have nominally accepted it, and all of which have been taught to regard themselves as brothers in the one family of God, brothers, to establish whom in brotherhood Christ Jesus gave His life. Here, too, are war's fierce hatreds and intolerances. They are not peculiar to any people. Thanks, not to our superior merit, but to our geographical isolation, we are freer from these things than the other belligerents can be, yet even here in America we witness many lapses from that spirit of Christian chivalry which was enjoined upon us by our President. "See how these Christians love one another," was a true saying once. If it were repeated now, it could be said only in most bitter mockery. How can we send missionaries to spread

abroad the Gospel when we, who have enjoyed it for centuries, have made so little use of it, and have been governed so little by its precepts that all Christendom is today a winepress trodden by the wrath of God?

The answer to that question is penitence. It is the deep note justly sounded by our War Commission which called upon us to enter in a penitential spirit the new Church Year. We are not called to our churches to meditate upon Germany's ferocity, or Austria's duplicity, or Turkish cruelty, or Bulgarian rapacity. We are called upon to come in penitence to confess our own sins, and to pray to God for forgiveness for public and for personal transgressions of His laws. If we do that in any deeply sincere way we shall learn the attitude which becomes us as carriers of the Gospel. We cannot go in any loftiness, in any consciousness of superiority, in any Pharisaical pride. What have we to be proud of? We must go humbly to those who have not yet known Christ, and ask them to look, not upon us, but upon Him. We go to preach, not ourselves, but Christ crucified. All the sins of Christendom have been committed in spite of what He has said to us. Disobedience of Him has had exactly the consequences which He foretold. He told us that to hear His words, and assent to them and then not do them, is perdition. We have built our western civilization upon the sands of worldly interests and ambitions, and the rain has descended, and the floods have risen, and the winds have blown, and it has fallen, and great has been its fall.

This brings us to the new hopes and new incentives. When penitence is real, and when it is thoroughgoing, it softens and opens the heart to the divine grace. God can use the penitents for the bringing in of His kingdom. He can use them because they let Him use them; they do not oppose to His will and purpose the obstacles of their self-sufficiency and pride. It is a new world which will confront us after the war. It will be open as never before to new influences. Men and women will no longer be hide-bound by old traditions. They will be willing to try things which they have never really tried before, but only talked of trying. Young men will be coming back from the War, steeled to a determination from which all things will be possible if the Church of Christ makes itself ready for them, ready to use them, ready to use for Christ their stern young realism, with its scorn of compromise, of temporizing measures, and of all conventional and artificial things.

Then will come, I think, the greatest opportunity for Christian missions that the Church has known since the Day of Pentecost. We ought to be making ready for it. We ought to be making large preparation for it. When our soldiers come home to us let it be to a Church which has found itself at last, which is pulsing with generous life, which is glowing with the spirit of the earliest missionary ages, the belief that this world belongs to the Blessed One who died for it, and that by the faithfulness of His disciples it shall be won and given back to Him.

Copies of this leaflet may be obtained from THE WOMAN'S AUXILIARY, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York, by asking for W. A. 24.

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